

Angelology

The Doctrine of Angels

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THERE STOOD BY ME THIS NIGHT AN ANGEL OF GOD...SAYING FEAR NOT, PAUL!

(Acts 27:23-24)

Yes, the angels of God can find their way through the murkiest air, and alight on the most weather-beaten vessel that ever ploughed its difficult way through the stormy seas. Wherever you are, O child of God, God's angels have their eyes fixed on you; and in a moment, if it were God's will to give you eyes, you would see them. – F.B. Meyer



Introduction:

This is not a comprehensive study of the doctrine of angels, but an outline of basic biblical truths that give us a panoramic view of the subject. You may use these truths as a basis for your own personal study. You will surely be blessed to learn what God's Word says about a special segment of His creation of living personalities.

Why should we study angelology? First, because all of God's creation deserves our interest, especially the greatest—man and angels. Second, our curious nature drives us to seek an understanding of the mysteries of the Bible. Third, this mystery has not been satisfactorily solved in the hearts and minds of many Christians. Hopefully, this study will answer some questions you might have and bring added comfort with an increased knowledge of the world of spirits. However, this study of angels is greatly condensed. The subject is so complex and the biblical information is so vast we cannot begin to cover it in the limitation of space here.

There is no realm of being through the whole universe that is so mysterious, as the unseen world. It so baffles research that, after centuries, scientists are still divided about whether or not it exists. Some have discovered facts of the psychic realm, but others remain absolute agnostics. But the only clear revelation of this mystery is contained in God's Word.

We must face the truth—we know nothing about angels except what God has told us in the Scriptures. What poets, writers of fiction, artists and writers of music lyrics have written and drawn about angels is not authentic unless it is true to the biblical record—it is only the product of their imagination. Let's consider some facts about this unseen world from the pen of A.T. Pierson—edited and adapted by this author.

I. The unseen world of spirits

1. There is an unseen world that is invisible and insensible. Its forces and phenomena can be tested by physical senses.

2. This unseen realm is infinitely more important than the realm of the material and visible because of its potential for good or evil.

3. This unseen world belongs, not to the temporal, but to the eternal order. It is the realm where *life* is found and from which all *life* proceeds, and which we have no proof that literal death ever invades.

4. This unseen world is a world is a world of Intelligent and Conscious Being. It is a world if independent life, populated with spirits, which if not disembodied, are independent of material organism.

5. In this unseen world the One ruling all-pervasive *spirit* is God—source of all Being. He alone has inherent and uncreated life.

6. In this unseen world are countless forms of inferior and created spirits, differing in intelligence, dignity and power.

7. These spirits are called in the Bible *angels*. They exist in a vast hierarchy with several ranks: Archangels, Principalities, Authorities or powers, Thrones, Rulers, Dominions, Cherubim, Seraphim, Spirits, etc.

8. Among these spirits, or angels, a mysterious Revolt once took place, headed by Satan, who drew after him in his fall multitudes, now known as “fallen angels,” evil spirits, devils, or demons. (Devils should be interpreted demons.)

9. All spirits, good or bad, have access to man’s *spiritual* being and they influence him for good or evil. More than one spirit at a time may influence him.

10. A Christian may be influenced at one moment by God’s Holy Spirit, and the next by an evil spirit.

II. The origin of angels

“Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created” (Psalm 148:2-5).

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:” (Colossians 1:16).

The Bible makes it clear to us—angels were created. They were not born, nor have they not always existed as God. Before God created man, He created myriads of beings described as Angels. This creation took place in eternity past.

The word “angel” means messenger, and is used also to refer to others who are human messengers. Other human messengers are the angels of the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 2-3). It is commonly believed that these messengers were the pastors of the churches—they are not a part of the created angels.

Through the years, it has been believed that Godly men who die become angels—and also that infants who die become angels. There is no biblical foundation for believing this.

Angels are a distinct order of beings, superior to man, created to operate in God’s behalf and serve a special purpose in His plan for the ages. It is probably correct to say that God created all angels at once. They do not increase nor decrease in number—neither do they die.

Angels are mentioned over a hundred times in the Old Testament and more frequently in the New Testament.

The term “angel” is also used to refer to “the Angel of Jehovah,” and refers to appearances of Christ in the Old Testament. This is called a theophany, meaning a divine manifestation of deity. There are quite a few examples of such a manifestation in the Old Testament. We will take note of only one found in Genesis 18.

“And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, And said, My LORD, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:” (Genesis 18:1-3).

These three men who visited with Abraham and Sarah were Jesus and two angels. Read the rest of the chapter to find the importance and purpose of their visit. Jesus visited them to make a glad announcement—they were about to become parents of the child of promise, Isaac, in spite of their age. At other times when God deemed it necessary to make an unusual declaration, God sent Jesus, “the angel of the Lord” – not “the Lord’s angel” nor any other angel, but “the angel of the Lord.”

III. The Classification of angels

A. Holy angels

Angels are divided into two classifications. The Holy angels did not rebel with Lucifer, but chose to remain true in their allegiance to God.

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;” (Revelation 5:12).

1. **The Angel of the Lord** - This angel is presented as no other angel in the Scriptures. He possesses a position no other angel could occupy. He is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He presented himself to Hagar, Abraham and Gideon.

2. **The cherubim** - This word is the plural of cherub. They are always associated with the throne of God. They were present in Eden and kept Adam and Eve from re-entering the Garden.

3. **The Anointed Cherub** - This is said to be Satan in his unfallen state. “You are the anointed cherub that covers; and I have set you so: you were upon the holy mountain of God; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire” (Ezekiel 28:14).

4. **The Seraphim**. These angelic beings are mentioned only in Isaiah. “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings....” (Isaiah 6:1).

5. **The Archangel** – “Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, did not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke you” (Jude 9). See also I Thessalonians 4:16.

B. Fallen angels

“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 1:6).

Satan, who led this defection of angels, was an archangel, endowed with great wisdom and power, whose very excellence inspired the pride which led to his downfall, and led to aspire to the throne of the universe, to be God.

The fallen angels are divided into two groups: those who are free to serve Satan in his evil work and those who are bound in chains awaiting judgment.

III. The characteristics of angels

A. Angels are spirits.

“Of the angels he said, Who makes his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire” (Hebrews 1:7). See also Hebrews 1:14; Psalm 104:4.

B. Angels are corporeal.

Although being spirit, they have the power to become visible and manifest themselves in a semblance of human form and perform bodily acts. Mary “sees two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain” (John 20:12). See also Genesis 18:1-8; 19:1-3; Judges 6.

C. Angels are masculine.

It is an error to say they are sexless. They are always manifested in the form of man. Masculine pronouns are always used in connection with them.

“And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he said unto them, Be not affrighted: you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: He is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him” (Mark 16:5,6). See also Matthew 28:2-4; Luke 1:26.

D. Angels are celibates.

There is no record of angels ever marrying angels. “In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven” (Matt. 22:30). The quoted Scripture does not mean that we will be sexless, but that we will not marry.

E. Angels are deathless.

They will never die, or cease to, exist. They do not grow old. “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection” (Luke 20:35, 36).

F. Angels are immutable.

There is no matter in them that can change.

G. Angels are free to move about.

They are not subject to limitation, or space as we are. (Acts 17:26). However, they are not omnipresent as God is

H. Angels are mighty.

They are not omnipotent (almighty). They are mightier than we are, but are inferior to God. "To you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels" (II Thessalonians 1:7). See also Acts 5:19; 12:5-11, 23; Psalm 103:20; II Peter 2:10,11.

I. Angels are wise.

They possess superhuman intelligence, yet they are not omniscient (all-wise). One of the purposes of Paul's preaching was "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10, 11). See also II Samuel 14:17-20; Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32; I Peter 1:10-12.

J. Angels are subordinate.

They are always subject to God. Even Satan is in this category. There is nothing he can do, but by the will of God. "[Jesus Christ] is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (I Peter 3:22). See also Hebrews 1:4-8,13,14.

K. Angels are innumerable.

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;" (Revelation 5:12).

"Ye are come into mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels" (Hebrews 12:22).

"Think you that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53). Six thousand comprised a legion. The Lord could have called for seventy-two thousand angels for aid had he so desired. See also Daniel 7:10; Psalm 68:17.

L. Angels are powerful.

"Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses" (Isaiah 37:36).

VI. The ministry of angels

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14).

A. Angels worship God.

“Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 5:12).

B. Angels give guidance.

“The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spoke unto me, and that swore unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shall take a wife unto my son from thence” (Genesis 24:7).

“And he said unto me, The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shall take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house:” (Genesis 24:40).

C. Angels provide.

“And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God”

D. Angels protect.

“The angel of the LORD encamps round about them that fear him, and delivers them” (Psalm 34:7).

E. Angels deliver.

“My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocence was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt” (Daniel 6:22).

F. **Angels comfort.** “For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee” (Acts 27:23-24).

“The devil left him (Jesus), and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him” (Matthew 4:11). See also Luke 22:43.

G. Angels give direction.

“And the angel of the Lord spoke unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert” (Acts 8:26).